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**Speaker Naize provides report to Council on opening day of the Spring Session**

**WINDOW ROCK** – Speaker Johnny Naize (Low Mountain, Many Farms, Nazlini, Tachee/Blue Gap, Tselani/Cottonwood) provided a report to members of the 22<sup>nd</sup> Navajo Nation Council on the opening day of the Spring Council Session.

In the written report, Speaker Naize touched on several important issues including the purchase of Navajo Mine, the proposed “Department of Health”, the proposed Fort Wingate Army Depot Land Division, and the Little Colorado River Settlement.

Although the Navajo Transitional Energy Company, LLC has purchased Navajo Mine, there remain a number of challenges to ensure the continuation of operations of the Four Corners Power Plant and the mine itself, according to the report.

“There exists a need to expand the operations of the mine, which will require the renewal or issuance of several federal permits,” Speaker Naize wrote.

In addition, a draft of a comprehensive environmental impact statement is currently available for public review and comment which addresses the power plant lease amendment, energy transmission lines, Navajo Mine permit renewal, and the new coal mine area, each of which are required for the continued operation of the mine.

In other matters, Speaker Naize also addressed the ongoing development of a proposed “Department of Health” for the Navajo Nation.

Council Delegate Dwight Witherspoon (Black Mesa, Forest Lake, Hardrock, Pinon, Whippoorwill) introduced Legislation No. 0346-13, which seeks to form a “Department of Health,” to consolidate certain responsibilities and authorities under the proposed department.

“I initiated legislation to create the Department of Health Creation Task Force, which is responsible for reviewing and assessing Legislation No. 0346-13 to develop it in the best interest of the Navajo Nation and Diné Citizens,” stated Speaker Naize in the written report.

Speaker Naize also addressed U.S. House Bill 3822, sponsored by U.S. Rep. Ben R. Luján (D-NM) which seeks to divide approximately 21,000 acres of parceled land east of Gallup, N.M. between the Navajo Nation and the Zuni Tribe, which was previously used by the military to store ammunition and explosive materials.

On March 27, Speaker Naize along with Council Delegate Edmund Yazzie (Churchrock, Iyanbito, Mariano Lake, Pinedale, Smith Lake, Thoreau) testified before the House Subcommittee on Indian and Alaska Native Affairs in regard to the proposed land division.

“I testified that currently, the Navajo Nation has not taken a position in support of or in opposition of H.R. 3822. I made it clear that until the Navajo Nation Council does so, the issue is still open,” wrote Speaker Naize.

In reference to water rights, Speaker Naize said he has met with the Navajo Nation Department of Justice to discuss bringing together the various groups that have an interest in developing a settlement of water from the Little Colorado River.

Speaker Naize explained that the U.S. Department of Justice and the U.S. Department of Interior have yet to meet to discuss the issue.

“Because both the U.S. DOJ and DOI have declined to meet with the Navajo Nation, a formal letter from President Ben Shelly was sent on March 21st, 2014 to request a meeting on the issue and to reaffirm that both have a trust responsibility in the matter, and outright refusal to meet runs contrary to that responsibility. There has been no response to the letter to date,” Speaker Naize wrote.

In his report to Council, Speaker Naize also touched on the Cobell Land Buy-Back Program, Navajo Technical University, and veterans issues.

Council members voted 15-0 to accept the report.

To view Speaker Naize’s full report, please visit:

[http://www.navajonationcouncil.org/pressReleases/2014/APR/Speakers\\_report\\_to\\_NNC\\_2014\\_Spring\\_Session\\_21APR2014.pdf](http://www.navajonationcouncil.org/pressReleases/2014/APR/Speakers_report_to_NNC_2014_Spring_Session_21APR2014.pdf)

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